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by Joseph McBride

Where *was* George? The saga of Vice President George Bush's alleged involvement with the Central Intelligence Agency in 1963 grows curiouser and curiouser. In an article in *The Nation* of July 16/23 [" 'George Bush,' C.I.A. Operative"], I reported the discovery of a memorandum from J. Edgar Hoover, then director of the F.B.I. saying that "Mr. George Bush of the Central Intelligence Agency" had been briefed by the Bureau on November 23, 1963, about the reaction of anti-Castro Cuban exiles in Miami to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

After the article appeared, the C.I.A. put out a story that the George Bush mentioned in the memorandum was not Vice President George Herbert Walker Bush; he was George William Bush, who had worked for the agency in 1963-64. Although the agency claimed that his present whereabouts were unknown, I located George William Bush. He told me he was a coast and landing-beach analyst with the agency in those years, with the rank of GS-5, but that he definitely did *not* receive the F.B.I. briefing in 1963.

As reported in my article, Vice President Bush, through spokesman Stephen Hart, denied that he was the man referred to in the memo: "I was in Houston, Texas, at the time and involved in running the independent oil drilling business. And I was running for the Senate in late '63. I don't have any idea of what he's talking about." Hart added, "Must be another George Bush." When I first asked the C.I.A. about Hart's theory, it invoked its policy of neither confirming nor denying anyone's involvement with the agency.

But after the *Nation* story received wide coverage in the media, the C.I.A. evidently changed its mind. On July 19, agency spokeswoman Sharon Basso told the Associated Press that the Hoover memo "apparently" referred to George William Bush, who had worked in 1963 on the night watch at C.I.A. headquarters, which "would have been the appropriate place to have received such an F.B.I. report." She said this George Bush left the C.I.A. in 1964 to work for the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Why did the agency break with its longstanding policy of "neither confirm nor deny"? Basso said it believed "the record should be clarified." Another C.I.A. official told the A.P., "We put a lot of effort into this."

In fact, the latest C.I.A. release seems less a clarification than a strategic

obfuscation. Hart of the Vice President's office put out the same data to Sarah Perl of *The Nation*. Both Perl and I called the Defense Intelligence Agency, and a spokesman confirmed that George William Bush had worked there between February 1964 and July 1965, performing the same duties that he had with the C.I.A., those of a civilian-grade government intelligence research specialist, leaving with the rank of GS-7. His last known address was 401 Cambridge Road, Alexandria, Virginia. A check of old Alexandria city directories showed that a George W. Bush, "emp US govt," did live at the Cambridge Road address in 1964 and subsequent years, and that he shared the house with Chester K. Bush of the U.S. Army. Current city records show that the deed to the house is in the names of Colonel Bush and his wife, Alice, and that a George William Bush at that address paid his automobile decal fee to the city this February.

I called Colonel Bush, who said he was George William Bush's father. He confirmed that his son had worked for the C.I.A. and still lived at the house, but said he could not come to the phone because he was ill; he asked me to call back the following evening. When I did, I spoke to George William Bush, who is 49 and works as a claims representative for the Social Security Administration. He said he had worked for the C.I.A. for about six months in 1963-64. When I read him the Hoover memo about the F.B.I. briefing, his response was, "Is that the other George Bush?"

While in the C.I.A., he had never received interagency briefings because he was "just a lowly researcher and analyst" and worked only with documents and photographs. He said he "knew neither one" of two people the memorandum mentions as also being briefed, William T. Forsyth of the F.B.I. and Capt. William Edwards of the D.I.A. "So it wasn't me," he said.

Bush said he left the C.I.A. because he was offered a job by the D.I.A. at a higher grade and salary. He said he stayed at the D.I.A. until he joined the Social Security Administration in January 1968. He professed he was "a little bit amazed, but not entirely surprised" that the C.I.A. and the D.I.A. had divulged his employment with them. "I didn't know they were at liberty to release all this," he said. "It was certainly without advance notice." Bush said he had not known of the story in *The Nation* about Vice President Bush's alleged 1963 ties with the C.I.A.

There was a minor discrepancy in this George Bush's account of his background: Although he told me that he went directly from the D.I.A. to the Social Security Administration in 1968, the 1967 Alexandria directory lists his occupation as city social worker. When I inquired about this

job, Bush said he had held it for "about a year" before going to work for the Social Security Administration. City personnel records show that he joined the Alexandria Department of Public Welfare as a social worker trainee on August 2, 1965, rose to the rank of social worker on August 10, 1966, and left on January 12, 1968.

The Social Security Administration confirmed that Bush is currently employed in its Arlington, Virginia, office, and other points in Bush's story also checked out. He told me that before he joined the C.I.A. he had been living in Honolulu, where his father was stationed in the Army; that he had attended the University of Hawaii; and that he had worked for the Honolulu Department of Social Services and Housing. The Honolulu city directory for 1962-63 lists Chester K. Bush, "emp USARPAC," as residing at 1172 Koloa Street, and City of Honolulu personnel records confirm that George William Bush lived at that address while working as a trainee social worker for several months in 1963. The registrar's office of the University of Hawaii confirmed that he attended classes there from the fall of 1959 through the summer of 1961, graduating with a B.A. in history on September 1, 1961. The age he gave me checked out as well: According to school records, he was born on May 18, 1939, in White Plains, New York.

In the Alice in Wonderland world of intelligence there is always the possibility that people are not who they say they are. And there is that discrepancy about his job as a social worker, for which there could be a perfectly innocent explanation. At my request, Victor Navasky, editor of *The Nation*, called Bush again and had him repeat his story about his work with the C.I.A. in 1963-64 and his statement that he was not the man of the F.B.I. memorandum.

Why did the C.I.A. indicate that George William was the Bush in question without attempting to locate him first? Why did the media report the agency's version without checking further? And where was Vice President George Herbert Walker Bush on November 23, 1963? If he was working for the C.I.A. then, why hasn't he told us?

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